

T. I. Nepia - P. Moore - B. Grace-Smith – K. Kawana

Trick or Treat

Indigenous voices from Aotearoa edited by Sally

Te Itirawa Nepia

UNDERSTANDING IS THE KEY

Ko Horouta raua ko Nukutere oku nei waka
(Horouta and Nukutere are my canoes)

Ko Hikurangi toku nei maunga
(Hikurangi my mountain)

Ko Uepohatu toku nei hapu
(Uepohatu my collective families)

Ko Ngati Porou toku nei iwi
(Ngati Porou my tribe)

Tihei Mauri Ora

I have always been attracted to the creative energy of performance. I was on the dole for many years after being expelled from school at fifteen. From then on I had to take paths on which I knew I would be okay. I could not do the materialistic thing: work for money or at things I did not believe in. Lots of what I did for ten years was in the arts; visual arts, healing arts, massage, *reiki*. I have a diploma in massage. Instinctively I feel safe and competent with creative energy. I feel I can understand.

Three years ago I was asked to be stage manager at the Performance Cafe. Then I was production assistant at Taki Rua Theatre's last Te Reo Season. They presented full-length shows all in Maori. The aim was to support the learning and speaking of the Maori language. There is a great need for this kind of work. It was amazing to see big groups of Maori people coming to the theatre.

Maori performance needs to be presented differently to European theatre. It does not work in an urban black box theatre. Maori theatre needs to travel around, or be residential. We must play on *marae* (traditional meeting places). We must take performances to where the people are, to the land, to the *marae*, to the community. They should reach

Tiriti o Waitangi / Treaty of Waitangi was signed in 1840 by some Maori Chiefs of Aotearoa (New Zealand) and representatives of Queen Victoria, who offered protection in return for peaceful settlement of British immigrants. The First Article is in English, the Second Article in Maori, and they do not exactly correlate. Maori signed in the belief that they would retain sovereignty, land ownership and control of their forests, fisheries and taonga (sacred treasures). For 150 years the Crown ignored the Treaty, but today it is the legal basis for settling disputes between Maori and Government.

everybody, not just an urban élite. They should not be about starting times, tickets and going in and out of a theatre building. A performance must say something, send out a message. It creates a ripple effect, a vibration, it spreads out. Before the Community comes the Self, then the *Whanau* (family), then the *Hapu* (group of families), then the *Iwi* (tribe). Starting from the Self, the ripple begins.

Maori women must be acknowledged for what they do - their contribution to family and community. They are strong, *Wahine toa*. Men need to know women have a place. Carving is mostly done by men, yet we have invited women carvers to the Paekakariki Festival. I believe women were equal in former times. Traditionally a god always had a woman twin by his side; for example, Tangaroa always had Hinemoana.

A theory of Maori women's performance needs to be developed. It must be documented and discussed. From the exploration of the personal and emotional, real discoveries will come, firstly in relation to the things around us - families, partners, children. Political issues will come later when the form is stronger. Strong statements are being made in music, it is the first art form to find its political voice - *waiata*, soul, funk, hiphop, rap - by artists like Mahinarangi Tocker, Maree Sheehan, Emma Paki, Moana Jackson, Katarina Kawana, and others.

The Pacific Sisters are a performing group of Maori/Samoan/Cook Islands women working collectively with a common interest. They happen to come from different Pacific cultures, but they share stories and mythologies. They are constantly working to get a balance in the group, so one culture does not overshadow the others. I am very excited by the Pacific Sisters, who are currently creating a storm in Sydney at the Pacific

Wave Festival. I want to go to New York, and take a performance group like them - a group of Maori and Pacific Island women. After that, I will move back to the East Coast, to Gisborne, where my people are from, to develop a cultural policy within the *runanga* (tribal committee). Gisborne is the most isolated regional centre in Aotearoa. I want to tour works in *te reo* Maori for *kohanga reo* and *kura kaupapa* (nursery and primary schools teaching in *te reo*), and productions for adults too.

At the moment I am preparing the Festival at Paekakariki which I see as an exchange between indigenous women, hosted by Maori women. I know instinctively that the Festival should be residential, because it is traditionally based. All creative energy - including the performances - should be kept in the same area where people eat, sleep and live together. The European women will find their place if they have a strong connection to their own culture.

Traditional skills will be taught in the workshops at Paekakariki - *mau rakau* (moving stick), *taiaha*, *patu* (Maori martial arts), *raranga* (weaving), *karanga* (calling), composing *waiata* (song). All Maori performance groups contain aspects of traditional culture, as well as contemporary costume and dance, rap, hiphop and story-telling. A decision is made by Maori culture to offer the teaching, and a decision is made by other cultures, for example the European, to participate in the workshops.

The healing of Maori is something I am always working towards, for now in the performing arts. I am most worried about women. They are not necessarily in a threatened position, but they need to be strengthened. They will be the ones who make the changes. Women do so much unacknowledged work. A healthy Maori society is one

where everyone participates and engages in what is going on. A performance can change perceptions. Most people in society today are just trying to survive, they are not engaged, they have covered up their passions. Performance is a way of disrupting this blankness, this not feeling, not seeing, this lack of engagement. A *karanga* is powerful, emotional and it can be confrontational to someone who doesn't understand; throwing a stick around could be misinterpreted. Understanding is the key. One culture must understand the other. This is why we are working together on this project. We need jolts like the Festival. But it's hard. We need faith. I believe bi-culturally, Magdalena Aotearoa will work, because of our commitment to the project.

Parekotuku Moore **A HEAD FULL OF WORDS**

Ko Taupiri te maunga

(Taupiri is my mountain)

Ko Waikato te awa

(Waikato is my river)

Ko Tainui te waka

(Tainui is my canoe)

Ko Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Koroki

Ngati Ahuru, Ngaiterangi

Oku iwi

(Are my tribes, my people)

Ko Mangakaretu te marae

(Mangakaretu is my ancestral home, my meeting place)

Ko Parekotuku Moore ahau

(Parekotuku Moore is my name)

I am the daughter of Margaret Te Atuakawa Haumaha and David Davenport Moore, born in 1964, half-caste Maori. "A girl with the best of both worlds", was what my adoring white grandmother told me. Raised

in Porirua, affectionately known as "Bongaroa" (so named by racist Europeans), and nowadays famous as the New Zealand government's playground for pilot programmes on health, welfare and education. It is a Maori/Polynesian slum vibrant with character and strength - home to me. These past three years, among many other things, I have been writing, not necessarily for publication, but for the pressing need to put pen to paper. Before this I had been writing in my head, phrasing words, stringing sentences, creating poems and collecting the deepest of thoughts. I have loads of notebooks and journals where pages spill over with words, doodles, drawings - all captured and permanent on paper.

Every so often I become braver and step out with my writing. This is one of those occasions, with much more to come yet. I write about being Maori, a woman, an urban Maori. I write about being indigenous to this land, Aotearoa - the land of the long white cloud; about my conscious and unconscious connections to the land, to mother earth - Papatuanuku; about self-identity and all the confusion or growth around identity. I also write for and about my mother, who left this life in 1992.

I would like to share a poem I wrote while travelling abroad. It has its roots in an earlier time in my life when I was questioned by my Maori sisters in the political movement. I endured three days of many challenges and accusations that left me stripped of words, emotionally scattered to the four winds, yet spiritually pulsating like a stubborn flame that wouldn't go out. I left the battleground proud in my walk, but humbled, and with a head full of words, words and more words. The poem is called *Questions*.

Questions

Who are you?

Where do you come from?

You say you're Maori!
Who are you?
Where do you come from?
You say you're Maori!
(Huh! We wonder.)

Sitting smug in that urban chair
Cast judgement, point finger
Make a decision for us
Us, here!
(Huh! We see you.)

What are you?
A corporate suit yuppy-muppy
Born again
Potato
Try-hard
Walking Text Book Maori
Just found yourself?
Or are you still lost?
(Huh! We think so.)

Accountable to who are you?
Family, community, lover, land?
Politically correct are you?
(Huh! We think not.)
More like the bald-head's
Money and philosophy
Is your accountability.

Why question, you ask.
Why not, we say,
For it's the Maori

To rage and humour
Challenge and humble
Express a haka
Request apology to heart
Face to face
(Huh! We got you.)

Where are you at, sista?
Where have you been, sista?
Who are you? You say you're
Maori?
(We doubt it!)

Briar Grace-Smith
THEATRE, MARAE, SPACES OF
PERCEPTION

Through my mother Miriama Smith I am from the Nga Puhī and Ngāti Wai tribes in the Far North, a place we often go back to. My father Alan Smith was Pakeha, of Scots descent and raised in the South Island. I was mainly brought up on the Kapiti Coast, and my partner Himiona Grace is Ngāti Toa and Ngāti Raukawa, from this area. His family *marae* is located nearby in Hongoeka Bay, Plimmerton. Our three children are Waipuna, Miriama and Himiona. I went to Aotea College in Porirua.

At school, I always wanted to write. When I left, I didn't know much about theatre, but I took a job as a journalist at the *Evening Post*. One day they sent me to interview a new Maori theatre company - it was a Government work skills scheme for unemployed young people. When I got there they were having auditions, so I tried too. Then the next thing I knew, I was in the company. It was called Te Ohu Whakaari and was led by Rangimoana Taylor. We devised our own work. We were all Maori actors and each brought different skills - songs, dance. I brought writing skills. We also had traditional Maori arts teachers. We travelled for eighteen months round the country, in vans, playing in schools and *marae*. It was grueling: sleeping in classrooms, on floors. We were all teenagers still and so fit!

Since then I have always been involved with theatre, and the only interruptions have been to have kids. I have three kids. When Himi, the youngest, was two weeks old, we put him on a sheepskin rug in the middle of the group, as we were devising a new work for He Ara Hou. He Ara Hou was the next group I worked with, based here at Paekakariki. It was Roma Potiki's initiative. She wanted to start a Maori theatre company, to tell a collective story, to find the voice of young people. It was partly to restore the self-esteem of people in the

group, most of them unemployed, and many who had had a difficult life.

The first show, *Whatungarongaro*, was a mixture of styles, contemporary domestic drama, traditional *waiata* and dance, mask, and dream sequences. We talked about things never discussed in Maori theatre before, intimate stories told from the inside. We worked for a long time - it took eighteen months to make it. It shocked all audiences, both Pakeha and Maori. Sometimes people didn't want to see it. We were criticised for showing an overly negative view of Maori people: the main character is a street kid, a glue sniffer, an abused kid who in the end dies of an overdose. It's weird, now in the '90s, the negative image presented by Jake Heke in *Once Were Warriors* is acceptable!

Next we did a smaller show funded by the Health Department. *Hine* was group devised, very physical, with rap and break-dancing. It was based on interviews with young people, asking how they felt about themselves. We dealt with issues of identity, child abuse, peer pressure, yet found a funky way of presenting this heavy material. We toured schools, but there was little support from the New Zealand arts scene. Then we were invited to the Popular Theatre Festival in Sydney, where the show was really well received.

He Ara Hou came together last in 1996, in response to an invitation from a theatre festival in Canada. We had only four weeks to make a show. It was intense work. I was outside and I would take away the improvisations at night to write the script. It became *Waitapu*, the story of a carver who comes home to his village with a woman from the city. The village is hostile towards her. It is such a universal theme: leaving a small community, heading for the city, then coming home to hostility and suspicion.

I miss the group - though it got hard because of the talking and the length of time

it took to make decisions. Many of He Ara Hou are working today on projects with “youth at risk”. Almost everyone from the original group is still doing theatre. He Ara Hou had no formal training, no one had been to drama school. We were self-taught, and we absorbed influences. Many of us had never seen a play, but we immediately understood theatre could be a medium for change. I still do. I see it as a challenge to my own people as well as to non-Maori.

Nga Pou Wahine is a solo show for an actress. I wrote it in 1995. The main character is a misfit, a fringe-dweller, an adopted child searching for her identity, who works in a canning factory. She finds the voice of her real mother through dreaming. The actress plays six different characters and an ancestor. There are three strands in my plays - the ancestral voices, the real domestic contemporary world, and a view to the future through the dreamworld, the visionary world. It is an intuitive way of writing for me. The different levels are often present in contemporary Maori literature.

Purapurawhetu, a new work, positions a male weaver against the *rangatira* (chief). The male weavers' tradition is now lost. The *rangatira* takes advantage of a young girl, and she is sucked in by the charade. Women's *mana* (power) has been weakened through colonisation. Europeans told Maori men that women should be more subservient. I believe women once did the *taiaha*: people just did what was necessary, the gender boundaries were not as defined as they are today. But we have a new stereotype now - the Jake Heke guy, brutal, rough with his kids, sexy but cruel, a hard drinker. So I have created instead, in the weaver, a gentle character, kind to his kids, generous. He is the real *rangatira*. My message is that the only way you get to be a chief is through the smoke of the kitchen. I am interested in the small ways of changing people, shifts of perception, how history has been distorted, how

old stories and myths have been changed massively. Over time the women gods were lost. We need to find the voices of the women gods again. The role of women has to be looked at again.

For *Purapurawhetu* many more Maori people came to Downstage Theatre. Although there are many who will never go to a “theatre” - but will go to a *marae*. We make most money at *marae*. We charge just *koha* (donation), yet often come out with more money than at a conventional theatre in Wellington. On a *marae*, it is completely different from theatre in the city. Every time I take a play to a *marae*, there are children, families. It is important that children come. Afterwards there is dialogue, inter-action. You don't need mail-outs, advertisements, but just a face-to-face invitation. You must always take theatre productions out into the community.

There are very few older Maori women actors, as it is supposedly a new art form. Yet story-telling was part of tradition, women always told stories. I believe they used to play roles, create dialogues and make up impromptu characters. And with that certainty, I write my plays.

Voodoo Chile' aka Katarina Kawana TRICK OR TREAT

Polyfunk represent *rangatahi* of Polynesia
Pay respect pay reference to all our ancestors
Rooted to the land of the long white cloud
Aotearoa! Papatuanuku she comfort my proud
Attitude, progressive fuel-inject sista-style
What a *hori*, forever homey Voodoo Chile'
Tap my rhythms,
flex my wrists free from tension
Co-ordination, *haka* hand-sync precision
Well check the Allblacks.
Will I die Will I live Hi!
Free from the pits of the sweet Kumara
Fool the soldier enemy and fool Jim Bolger

We'll neva forget the treaty 1840
 Victoria and the crown
 you sure made your people proud
 As for the Maori people we neva sold out

We laugh, we cry, we are humbled
 By the innocence, no room to stumble in Unity
 Afinite and Oneness, Big Up to the creator
 We give you thankfulness
 Unite my red brother to my red sister
 And to my brown brother and my brown sister
 For independence and autonomy
 Every day sheds light for us to be free
 We share the gifts of our ancestors
 From the sky to the land and all between
 Create a path for our children
 and let them be seen
 And give them time and space
 cos that's our dream
 Feel the sweat in their tiny hands
 Hold them firm and safe in the round dance
 Feed them well in the bellies of our mother
 We've got to try my sister my brother

You decide if there's something inside You
 Are the one who can take it higher to the place
 That's special to you,
 You gotta be kind to yourself
 Never give up, never be in doubt
 And look to your roots, the truths of the past
 And take it forward and hold on tight
 No fear No pain Come Right
 Together we'll strive and live to the bright
 As foreseen by our people before
 The spirit comes to greet us at dawn,
 HINE TITAMA
 We love you anyway
 and this time I'm coming for more
 I'll come knocking at your door.
 Every time I hear the sound of my people cry
 As they mourn for a lost one

Every time I hear the sound of my people cry
 Mourn for days, weeks, even years
 and sometimes LONGER R R R
 Trickster

The undisturbed possession of Maori lands,
 forests, fisheries and *taonga* (echo)
 Trick or treat, trick or treat

TE ITIRAWA NEPIA (Aotearoa) is an arts administrator for Maori performing arts, and Director of the Magdalena Aotearoa Festival at Paekakariki in March 1999. She is studying for a master's degree in Maori and Management, and is a visual artist and healer.

PAREKOTUKU MOORE (Aotearoa) is descended from Ngati Raukawa, Ngati Koroki, Ngati Ahuru and Ngaiterangi. She is a poet, story-teller and cultural activist.

BRIAR GRACE-SMITH (Aotearoa) is a performer, director and playwright, and lives at Paekakariki on the Kapiti Coast. In 1998 she was Writer in Residence at Massey University. She is Facilitator for South of the Bush, the New Maori Playwrights Group, and is currently preparing a book of original stories for publication.

VOODOO CHILE' AKA KATARINA KAWANA (Aotearoa) is a composer, singer and DJ and has just built a recording studio at Paekakariki. Like the orators before, *rangatahi* and *wahine* are rising up to empower the status of Polynesians through music, performance and the spoken word.

SALLY RODWELL (Aotearoa) is a filmmaker, actor and co-director of the Magdalena Aotearoa Trust. She is co-founder of Red Mole Theatre, Women's Theatre Ensemble, Toadlilies, and Roadworks, a multilingual ensemble formed with young immigrants.